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NORTH CHICAGO -- The Martin Luther King Drive and Sheridan Road intersection will finally be reopened to traffic over the Union Pacific Railroad tracks at noon Monday, when North Chicago city officials also expect the long-anticipated re-opening of Great Lakes' Gate 4, which has been closed since 1990.

The \$6 million reconstruction of the intersection is expected to help boost the city's economy by increasing the traffic flow from the base directly into the downtown area, which is undergoing redevelopment.

"We're finally finished and we're quite pleased," said Mayor Leon Rockingham. "We're hoping to increase the traffic count which will help the development at Sheridan Crossing. A lot of businesses want to see that traffic count up. It will be great benefit to the city."

Gate 4 stands just east of Sheridan and King Drive. When Navy officials closed the gate to vehicle traffic, the city's business strip suffered a serious decline. Base officials announced plans to re-open the gate in 2001. Funding for traffic improvements at the intersection began flowing in 2003.

Whether Gate 4 will actually reopen is still a concern, because certain Navy officials, including Great Lakes Commanding Officer Richard Postera, have argued against it. But Rockingham said he had assurances from U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, who said he had assurances from "the Admiral" -- though Rockingham did not know which one.

If Gate 4 is not opened Monday, Illinois Department of Transportation engineers could postpone the opening of the crossing, because turn lanes feeding into the gate would leave drivers with nowhere to go.

A major development in the re-opening of Gate 4 will be the closing of the railroad crossing on

2nd Avenue, south of King Drive and 50 feet east of Sheridan Road.

According to city Engineer Bruce Burris, the crossing has always been considered unsafe,

"There's a gate and lights, but trucks waiting to pull onto Sheridan Road sometimes get stuck on the tracks," Burris said. "At the reconstructed crossing, an interconnect between the railroad gates and traffic signals will allow any traffic to clear the intersection."

Traffic signals at King Drive and Sheridan Road are scheduled to be turned on at 10 a.m. Monday.